

"The Beatitudes"

November 2, 2025

All Saints' Sunday

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Then he looked up at his disciples and said:

"Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

"Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled.

"Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.

*"Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you, revile you, and
defame you on account of the Son of Man. Rejoice on that day and leap for joy, for
surely your reward is great in heaven,*

for that is how their ancestors treated the prophets.

"But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation.

"Woe to you who are full now, for you will be hungry.

"Woe to you who are laughing now, for you will mourn and weep.

*"Woe to you when all speak well of you, for that is how their ancestors
treated the false prophets.*

*"But I say to you who are listening: Love your enemies; do good to those who hate
you; bless those who curse you; pray for those who mistreat you. If anyone strikes you
on the cheek, offer the other also, and from anyone who takes away your coat do not
withhold even your shirt. Give to everyone who asks of you, and if anyone takes away
what is yours, do not ask for it back again.*

Do to others as you would have them do to you.

Luke 6:20-31

May the words of my mouth
And the meditations of all of our hearts
Be acceptable in thy sight
O God, our Rock and our Redeemer.
Amen.

When we think of the beatitudes, we tend to think of Matthew's version from the Sermon on the Mount—which comes across as a kind of primer on piety. "Blessed are the poor IN SPIRIT," Jesus says. "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS." Luke's version of the beatitudes, on the other hand, often gets short shrift—and it's not hard to see why. On first glance it's closer to a manifesto of class consciousness than something you might read in "Daily Bread." Here Jesus says, "Blessed are the poor.... Blessed are those who are hungry now." You can almost hear the growling of stomachs in the original audience.

Jesus is talking to peasants who experienced poverty, hunger and persecution on a daily basis. It was a fact of life. And if there were any doubt about who Jesus was standing with, each "blessed" is paralleled with a "woe." "Woe to the rich, woe to you who are full now." You half expect Jesus to end things with, "Workers of the world, unite! You have nothing to lose but your chains!"

There is, in fact, an ongoing theme of reversal of fortune throughout Luke's gospel. When Mary, a young peasant woman, is told that she will bear the Messiah, she cries out: "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowly state of his servant.... He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He has brought DOWN the powerful from their thrones and lifted UP the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things—and sent the rich away empty." So much for Mother Mary, meek and mild.

In his very first sermon, given in his hometown synagogue of Nazareth, Jesus reads from the book of Isaiah: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." It is no coincidence that by the end of his sermon the hometown crowd tries to murder Jesus by throwing him off the side of a mountain. Jesus intends to turn everything upside down. This is revolution!

Indeed. But is he calling for a VIOLENT revolution? Is he talking about keeping the hierarchy, just changing who gets oppressed and who does the oppressing? "Meet the new boss/same as the old boss?"

It's not that Jesus ISN'T talking about bringing justice to the oppressed—or judgment upon the oppressor. It's not that he ISN'T concerned about the present and physical needs of the poor and the dispossessed—and the systems that keep them that way. He most certainly is. And it ISN'T as if he were telling his followers—you and me—to turn our backs on the vulnerable and the marginalized. He most certainly is not. He

is indeed telling you and me to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, care for the sick and visit the imprisoned—as he does most emphatically in the 25th chapter of the gospel of Matthew. But whatever else he IS saying, it is not some facile naming of winners and losers—like the world does—it is not some choosing of the few to be served by the many—like the world does—not some continuity of the way things are.

So what is he saying? Well, if we look more closely, it isn't the fact that the blessed are poor that makes them blessed—and it isn't that the rich are rich that makes them cursed. It is that one has hope of a radically new future and the other has only...the status quo. "Blessed are you who are poor for yours is the Kingdom of God." Yours is something more than all this mess. "But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation." This is it, for you. It will never get any better than this. You are trapped in history.

On the other hand, the blessed have the radically new future of the Kingdom of God—the beloved community—where everyone has a seat at the table, and no one goes hungry, and no one is rejected, persecuted, oppressed or maligned. The cursed have only more of the same—their consolation is no consolation at all—but only the condemnation of having to pretend that THIS is enough—that THIS is OK. That a broken world where the rich get richer and everyone else gets thrown away—is OK. That a world where the powers that be flood the zone with lies so none can find the truth in the blitz—just so that they can stay in power—as if that was the be all and end all—is OK. That a world where the powers that be can use military hardware to exterminate anyone they choose, in the Caribbean Sea—off the coast of Venezuela—or maybe anywhere in the world—without even the pretense of due process, making up excuses that no one really believes—like fisherman magically turning into terrorists in boats without even the capacity to reach our shores—because that kind of arbitrary power keeps us terrified and compliant—is OK.

THAT is NOT our destiny. We are people of hope—and hope is the power to imagine a new and better world—a world that has never fully existed yet—but is promised—is partially present in our yearning, in our reaching—in our building of community. Hope is the power to endure and hang on during the darkest of days. Hope is the power to shape our environments in the promise—in the image—of the radically discontinuous Kingdom of God—the already and the not yet.

Indeed, the kingdom has drawn near in Jesus Christ and we, ourselves, can draw on that power—we can bridge this world to the world that is being born in our striving—not in some far away heaven—but here on earth—and we can bear witness to

the promise that things do not have to be this way—and that we are equipped to build better worlds that have not even been imagined yet. God chooses to work through people like you and me—ordinary people—people of radical hope—people who need not be limited to our own finite imaginations, but who are able to be conduits for a force—a powerful, creative force—the power of love—working through you and me—normal people—not particularly virtuous—working through all people of radical hope of every denomination, persuasion, religion, spirituality and inspiration—bringing into being the coming world—the very power that holds all of creation together, the coherence, the creator, the sustainer, the redeemer—coursing through our very physical bodies reaching for heights unknown.

We are bearers of the Christ—WE use that name—but what it points to could never be contained in finite human language—we are bearers of the coming Christ—the Christ who is and was and will forever be—the Christ forever bringing the Kingdom of God to fruition—in ways and names and forms that cannot be contained in our finite minds and imaginations—that we can only be empowered by—and only surrender to—the Kingdom of God, the mystic muse of all that is good striving to be born into being.

Hear the Good News—the Kingdom of God belongs to no church—no finite institution or system—but only to those communities—(because indeed the “you” in every one of the beatitudes is plural, communal—you all)—the kingdom of God belongs only to those communities who receive their agency from the promise, who are delivered to hope, delivered to being empowered by the one WE call the Holy Spirit—but others know by other names—or no name at all—empowered to create something new—something beautiful—together: the Beloved Community! May it be so. Amen.